

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 1853

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OAS, VE, DR

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN VIEWS ON ELECTION OF OAS SECRETARY GENERAL

REF: STATE 029801; CARACAS 1720; CARACAS 1352

1. DOMINICAN AMBASSADOR RAFAEL BONILLA TOLD EMBOFF FEBRUARY 18 THAT HIS GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT THE CANDIDACIES OF PARAGUAY'S SAPENA PASTOR AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC'S GOMEZ BERGES FOR THE OAS SECRETARY GENERALSHIP ARE CANCELLING EACH OTHER OUT, AND THAT VENEZUELA'S BURELLI RIVAS IS EMERGING AS A STRONG COMPROMISE CONTENDER FOR THE JOB. BONILLA SAID THAT WHILE BURELLI IS ACTING ON HIS OWN TO GATHER SUPPORT WITHOUT OFFICIAL VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT SANCTION, SHOULD HIS CANDIDACY CONTINUE TO PROSPER (AS BONILLA CLAIMS WILL BE THE CASE) VENEZUELA WILL, AFTER THE FIRST BALLOT, ABANDON ITS COMMITMENT TO GOMEZ BERGES AND OPENLY BACK BURELLI. BONILLA FORSEES A SAPENA-GOMEZ DEADLOCK ON FIRST BALLOT, WITH BURELLI EMERGING AS THE "CONSENSUS" CHOICE IN SECOND OR THIRD BALLOTING. BONILLA DID NOT CONSIDER ARGENTINA'S ORFILA A STRONG CONTENDER.

2. BONILLA ASKED EMBOFF WHICH CANDIDATE USG SUPPORTS. WHEN EMBOFF REPLIED THAT THE U.S. IS PRESENTLY NEUTRAL, BONILLA INSISTED THAT BURELLI IN FACT ENJOYS U.S. SUPPORT. EMBOFF AGAIN DENIED THAT U.S. SUPPORTS ANY CANDIDATE.

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3. BONILLA EXPRESSED HIS BELIEF THAT BURELLI, WHOM HE DESCRIBED

AS AN ATTRACTIVE AND ABLE DIPLOMAT, WOULD BE EASIEST OF ALL THE CANDIDATES FOR THE U.S. TO WORK WITH IN THE OAS. EMBOFF REPLIED THAT THE U.S. WOULD DO ITS BEST TO WORK WITH WHOMEVER IS ELECTED SECRETARY GENERAL, AND REITERATED THAT THE U.S. DOES NOT CURRENTLY SUPPORT, OPENLY OR COVERTLY, BURELLI OR ANY OTHER CANDIDATE.

4. AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT: HOWEVER, WE MUST EVENTUALLY MAKE UP OUR MIND WHOM WE PLAN TO VOTE FOR. IN MY OPINION, BURELLI RIVAS WOULD BE AN OUTSTANDING CANDIDATE. HE SHOWED EXTRAORDINARY ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY IN ORGANIZING THE SPRAWLING LAW OF THE SEA CONFERENCE IN CARACAS LAST SUMMER. HE IS PERSONABLE, INTELLIGENT AND HAS HAD DIPLOMATIC EXPERIENCE AS VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO COLOMBIA AND LATER TO LONDON. HE LIKEWISE EARLIER IN HIS CAREER SERVED AS COUNSELOR OF EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. IF IN FACT WE EVENTUALLY DO VOTE IN HIS FAVOR, WE WILL GET MORE MILEAGE IF WE ANNOUNCE OUR BACKING SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.
MCCLINTOCK

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